

MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAM



MRCs on a Tour of the Cedar River Watershed,
Summer '04. *Photo: D. Batura*

2005 is the fourth year of the partnership between WSU King County Extension (WSU KCE) and King County Solid Waste Division (KCSWD). Over the past four years great progress has been made towards integrating goals and objectives to create a solid partnership with concrete benefits for both agencies. This briefing report will highlight some of the specific activities and successes related to WSU KCE's involvement with the King County Master Recycler Composter (MRC) Program in 2005.

The purpose of the MRC Program is to train and support a cadre of volunteers who supplement KCSWD Waste Reduction/Recycling (WRR) outreach and education activities and are integrated with other Department of Natural Resources' outreach programs. These volunteers provide King County residents with information and personalized assistance to promote waste reduction, recycling, and the efficient use of natural resources.

Overall Program Objectives

WSU Extension's objectives for the Master Recycler Composter Program are to:

- Host continuing educational events for alumni
- Foster a strong sense of community and strengthen communication channels among MRCs
- Increase public awareness of the MRC Program
- Make connections with diverse and underserved communities to support and encourage their interest in resource conservation issues

2005 Continuing Education Events Water Conservation & Reclamation

The first Continuing Education event of the year, held on June 8th, was a great success. Eighteen MRCs attended the Water Conservation & Reclamation Workshop.

Two local experts spoke about the excitement and issues around reclaimed water. The first speaker was Katharine Cupps, with Washington State Department of Ecology. Katherine presented on innovative water projects in Washington State and what the future of reclaimed water looks like. Next, Jo Sullivan with King County Water Reuse Program updated us on water reuse issues here in King County as well as what we can do in our backyards to help protect water quantity as we head into the dry months of summer.

"Reclaimed water" is defined as effluent derived in any part from sewage that has been adequately and reliably treated to a high quality so that it is suitable for beneficial uses. Reclaimed water is no longer considered a wastewater. All reclaimed water must meet the Water Reclamation and Reuse Standards established by the state Departments of Health and Ecology. The standards have stringent requirements to assure adequate treatment and pathogen removal.

Reclaimed water is used for landscape and crop irrigation, industrial processing, heating and cooling, dust suppression and soil compaction, flushing toilets in commercial buildings, wetland enhancement, streamflow augmentation, and groundwater recharge. Reclaimed water is distributed in purple piping, which is the international code designation for reclaimed water distribution systems. Reclaimed water is not intended for drinking.

Helping volunteers bring natural resource information to the public

Wastewater Treatment, Biosolids & Gardens to Envy!

The June continuing education event on reclaimed water sparked a number of questions about the wastewater treatment process and biosolids recycling. To best answer these questions, we planned another continuing education event: a tour of the Renton Wastewater Treatment Plant, the adjacent Waterworks Gardens and the brand new King County Demonstration Gardens which were in high bloom for the event.

MRC volunteers had the opportunity to visit the wastewater treatment plant, which is part of King County's regional system that treats wastewater for about 1.4 million people in the Puget Sound region. Every day, South plant treats millions of gallons of wastewater from our region's homes, businesses and industries. MRCs were also able to get an up-close look at the biosolids recycling process.

Next, we toured the adjacent Waterworks Garden, an 8-acre park that combines public art with stormwater treatment. The park includes basalt columns, a series of garden rooms with native plants, and ponds and wetlands that filter and treat stormwater runoff from the South Treatment Plant. The tour concluded with conversation in the popular "grotto" and artistic feature in the garden that was popular with tour participants.



South Treatment Plant in Renton, WA.

Photo: King County

MRC Program Recruitment and Promotion

WSU KCE promotes the MRC program year-round in many ways. A few of these efforts include Extension Education Events, the Master Gardener Program, the Extension Watershed Steward Program, and prominent placement on the WSU KCE website.

In a directed effort to promote the MRC program and recruit the maximum number of applicants for the 2006 training, WSU KCE launched a well-rounded campaign in the fall and winter of 2005. Many of the usual outreach methods were used including fliers, features in newsletters, and messages to list serves, however a few new recruitment methods we incorporated into this effort.

The first new approach was to work with Titan Outdoor to create visual ads that were placed in Metro buses on North and East routes in King County. These signs we thoughtfully designed so they can be re-used in bus campaigns in the future, or simply used as MRC promotional posters in a different venue. The program will benefit from the use of these outreach tools for years to come.

Next Steps

The partnership between KCSWD and WSU KCE will continue in 2006 bringing more opportunities to promote both organization's goals and objectives, and find new ways to educate the public about waste reduction and recycling. In 2006 we can look forward to a new approach to continuing education through MRC "Mini-Trainings", better education around waste reduction and recycling through an MRC Speakers Bureau, and better program promotion and education in partnership with King County Television and the Yard Talk Show.



MRCs on a tour during a continuing education event.

Photo: D. Batura



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